
NEWS RELEASE

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SENATOR GREGG CALLS ON PRESIDENT BUSH TO PROVIDE LIHEAP FUNDING

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) today joined with several of his Senate colleagues in calling on the Bush Administration to address the critical energy situation facing low-income families, including those in New Hampshire, by supporting \$1.7 billion in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding and \$300 million in contingency LIHEAP funding in Fiscal Year 2003 nationwide, and by requesting at least a similar amount in FY04. The LIHEAP is the primary federal program available to help low-income households and senior citizens pay their home energy bills. Earlier this month, Senator Gregg wrote an individual letter to President Bush urging the President to release the \$300 million in contingency funding already available in FY02 funds.

In the joint letter to President Bush, Senator Gregg stated, "According to the National Weather Service, this October was the coldest since 1976, and the majority of the country experienced below average temperatures this November. When your fiscal year 2003 Budget proposed the \$300 million cut in LIHEAP earlier this year, it did so 'in response to Department of Energy forecasts of lower fuel costs.' It will take \$2 billion to maintain the purchasing power for the LIHEAP program this winter compared to last year. At \$1.4 billion, states could be forced to deny assistance to over 400,000 low-income households and senior citizens. Given the forecast for a cold winter, we hope the Administration will reconsider its assessment of LIHEAP funding. When Congress reconvenes in January to consider the fiscal year 2003 appropriation bills, we urge the Administration to support \$1.7 billion in regular funding proposed in the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriation bill.

"We are also writing to request that you provide at least \$1.7 billion for regular LIHEAP funding and propose advance funding in your fiscal year 2004 budget. Currently, states are serving less than one-fifth of the 29 million households eligible for assistance. We recognize the difficult choices that you face in shaping the fiscal year 2004 budget, however, we believe that the strong and continued growth in households seeking LIHEAP assistance demonstrates that the funding needed for this program has never been greater. The LIHEAP program remains seriously underfunded. The program needs over \$3 billion simply to equal the purchasing power it provided in 1982. Without LIHEAP assistance, low-income families and senior citizens face the impossible choice between paying their home energy bills or affording other basic necessities such as prescription drugs, housing and food.

"Your leadership is needed to help ensure that low-income families, senior citizens and disabled individuals get the assistance they need to remain warm and safe this winter."

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